

AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, Eric Brimo, being duly sworn, depose and state as follows:

Affiant Background and Purpose of Affidavit

1. I am a Special Agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and have been so employed since 2016. Prior to working for ATF, I was a Special Agent with the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service, since 2010. I am familiar with federal laws relating to arson, have received training in the criminal use of fire, and have been trained in the investigation of violations of laws related to various acts of arson. I have participated in several fire investigations and have responded to numerous fire scenes in Vermont as part of my official duties with ATF.

2. I submit this affidavit to establish probable cause to believe that on or about April 5, 2024, Shant Michael SOGHOMONIAN, also known as Michael SOGHOMONIAN, violated 18 U.S.C. § 844(i), by maliciously damaging a commercial building used in interstate commerce and being used as a place of activity affecting interstate commerce in the District of Vermont.

3. This affidavit is based upon my own involvement in the investigation, my training and experience, and the investigation of various law enforcement officers. More specifically, I know some the information contained within this affidavit from conversations with, and information provided by, the Burlington Police Department (BPD), the Vermont State Police (VSP) Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit (FEIU), and the U.S. Capitol Police. Because this affidavit is submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause, I have not set forth each and every fact learned by law enforcement during the course of the investigation. Where I describe a statement, it is described in sum and substance and is not intended to be a verbatim quotation unless specifically indicated as such.

Fire at One Church St. in Burlington, VT

4. On April 5, 2024, I responded to One Church St. in Burlington, Vermont in reference to a reported suspicious fire that occurred on the third floor of the building near the Office of U.S. Senator Bernard Sanders. Upon arrival, I met with Burlington Police Department (BPD) Detective Eric Kratochvil, who advised the initial investigation indicated a fire had been set at the front door to the Senator's office. I then entered the building along with BPD Detective Nicole Moyer and members of the Burlington Fire Department. I observed the sprinkler system had been activated, flooding parts of the lobby, second floor, and third floor of the office building. I walked up the stairwell and entered the third-floor vestibule, where I observed large, dark burn marks on the door to the office and could smell the odor of smoke. I also observed what appeared to be the remains of a canister of lighter fluid and a red cap that were lying on the floor near the door. I took several photographs of the damaged area, two of appear below:



5. Several members of the Burlington Fire Department were still present, working to render the location safe. I was advised they had broken through the frame and wall surrounding the door to confirm that the fire had not spread beyond the immediate area through the walls and that the building occupants were safe. I was further advised that the Senator's office had seven employees working at the time of the fire who were not harmed and were able to evacuate safely.

6. In addition to the Senator's office, the building at One Church Street also contains other offices on its other floors that were occupied with an unknown number of persons at the time of the fire. The building rents space to various occupants operating as business, including a Chase Bank branch that is open to the public and the law firm of Paul Frank + Collins.

Vermont State Police FEIU Investigation

7. VSP Fire Investigator Matthew Hill also responded to the building at One Church Street and began his investigation into the origin and cause of the fire. Members of the BPD Identification Unit also arrived, photographed the scene, and then secured fire debris and other evidence from the scene for further analysis. After completing his assessment of the scene, Investigator Hill advised me the fire appeared to have been caused by an incendiary incident and had not naturally occurred.

8. I then obtained and reviewed a copy from a video security camera placed on a nearby wall outside the Senator's office door on the third floor of the building. During the video from around the time of the fire was reported, I observed a male wearing dark clothing and an orange hat exit the elevator and then walk forward to the front office door. I observed the male take out a container and dump an unknown liquid across the bottom of the front door the office. The male then dropped the container on the floor. The male then took out a lighter and could be seen setting fire to the area where the liquid had been placed across the front of the door. I

observed the fire quickly growing where the liquid had been placed, which based on my training and experience, is a potential indicator that the liquid was a type of accelerant. The video then shows the male exiting the area through a nearby stairwell. I took two screenshots from the security video and included them below. Based on my involvement in the investigation, the date and times depicted in the security video appear reasonably accurate.



9. During the investigation, I received copies of lease documents for the Senator's office space from Tyson Leombruno, Commercial Property Manager for the building at One Church Street in Burlington, Vermont. I reviewed those documents, which contained a copy of the original lease agreement. It indicated the lease commenced on January 3, 2019, and was valid through January 2, 2025. The lease indicated the rental cost, to be paid monthly for the office space, and listed the "Use of Premises" as "General office use and related activities." The lease is between the landlord, One Church Street Partnership LLP of South Burlington, Vermont, and the tenant, the Honorable Bernard Sanders. The lease notes the office address is One Church St., 3rd Floor, Burlington, VT.

10. After reviewing the lease information, I visited the website of U.S. Senator Bernard Sanders at <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/contact/>. Under the contact page, the website lists an office location at 1 Church St., 3rd Floor, Burlington, Vermont and another office located in Washington, D.C.

11. I then spoke with ATF Special Agent Tam Vieth, who previously was employed in the Office of the U.S. Senate Sergeant at Arms. SA Vieth advised U.S. Senators maintain in-state offices to conduct federal legislative business relating to state, local, private sector, and constituent entities. SA Vieth advised U.S. Senators frequently communicate from their respective in-state offices with other members of the Senate and the U.S. government who are working in other offices in different states across the country.

Identification

12. Following the incident, BPD sent out a media release which included still frames of the male obtained from video security footage obtained in and around the area of One Church Street in Burlington. The release included an appeal to the public asking anyone with

information about the identity of the male to contact BPD. One of the still frames included in the BPD release appears below. I noted that the clothing, in particular the shoes, the male was wearing in the still frame was consistent with the video I observed from Senator Sander's office.



13. On April 6, 2024, Det. Kratochvil advised that BPD had been contacted overnight by Gavin Grady, a manager of the Inn at Burlington (formerly the La Quinta Inn on Williston Road in South Burlington, Vermont). Grady advised he believed he recognized the male from the media release as SOGHOMONIAN, who had been a long-term guest at the Inn at Burlington. After receiving the information, BPD Sgt. John Stoughton responded to the Inn at Burlington and met with Grady and Nathan Hutchins, another employee at the Inn. Grady and Hutchins indicated they recognized SOGHOMONIAN, who checked in as "Michael SOGHOMONIAN," because he had stayed at the hotel for several weeks. Hutchins stated that, based on the individual's physical build and "fashion sense" from the media release, the individual depicted in the still frames definitely matched SOGHOMONIAN from Hutchins's observations of him while

he was staying at hotel for close to two months. Hutchins advised SOGHOMONIAN frequently wore the same orange- or salmon-colored hat that sat on top of his head. Hutchins stated that the majority of the time he (Hutchins) saw him (SOGHOMONIAN) wearing a winter coat and the same hat. Hutchins advised he had several interactions with SOGHOMONIAN because he would frequently come down to the lobby in the evenings and kept renewing his hotel stay for one or two nights at a time throughout his stay at the hotel. The interview between Sgt. Stoughton and Hutchins and Grady was recorded by a body worn camera, which I have reviewed. Hutchins was asked to swear to the truthfulness of his information, and he did so during the recorded video.

14. While at the Inn, Sgt Stoughton obtained screenshots of SOGHOMONIAN from hotel security video recorded when SOGHOMONIAN was staying at the Inn. Those images were provided to Det. Kratochvil. The screenshots are from a short video which has a date and timestamp of March 9, 2024. I have reviewed these screenshots and have attached one from the hotel along with one from the arson incident below:



Screenshot obtained from Inn at Burlington



Screenshot from arson incident included in media release

15. Using details from SOGHOMONIAN's registration information at the Inn, Det. Kratochvil obtained California Department of Motor Vehicles records for SOGHOMONIAN that included a photograph and further demographic information. The photograph from those records, which I have observed, appears consistent with the individual from the Inn and the individual shown walking outside of One Church Street. The registration information also contained the phone number SOGHOMONIAN provided to the hotel during his stay: 917-753-9907. A search of CLEAR (a commercial database used by law enforcement that is a repository of public records and which I have found to be reliable in previous investigations) shows the number has been associated with SOGHOMONIAN as of 2024.

16. During my previous employment with the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), I received training in general techniques for analyzing and comparing photographs of individuals for use during passport and visa fraud investigations. I have previously used these techniques as investigative leads in prior federal investigations and during protective intelligence operations while employed by DSS. I have reviewed the screenshots from the hotel with still screenshots from the arson incident and assess that SOGHOMONIAN appears similar to the same individual from the arson incident.

Conclusion and Request

17. Based on the information set forth above, I believe there is probable cause that on or about April 5, 2024, in the District of Vermont, Shant Michael SOGHOMONIAN, also known as Michael SOGHOMONIAN, maliciously damaged by means of fire the building at One Church Street in Burlington, Vermont—a building used in interstate commerce and as a place of activity affecting interstate commerce—in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 844(i).

18. I respectfully request the Court issue a Criminal Complaint charging him accordingly and a warrant for his arrest.

Dated at Burlington, in the District of Vermont, this 6th day of April 2024.



Eric Brimo, Special Agent
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 6th day of April 2024.



HON. KEVIN J. DOYLE
United States Magistrate Judge
District of Vermont